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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQ - ITALIAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL - CIA EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION CHINA - TAIWAN - ARMS EMBARGO
PARIS - THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAQ - ITALIAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL - CIA EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION CHINA - TAIWAN - ARMS EMBARGO

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

SEVERAL FRONT PAGES AND EDITORIALS ARE DEVOTED TO THIERRY BRETON, THE NEW FINANCE MINISTER'S FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE. LE FIGARO_OPTS FOR A FRONT PAGE ON THE RISING PRICE OF OIL, AND THE DIFFICULT EQUATION BRETON MUST RESOLVE, BETWEEN SOCIAL REFORMS, THE NATIONAL DEFICIT AND UNION DEMANDS.

STANDING APART, LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION DEVOTES ITS FRONT PAGE AND A FIVE-PAGE REPORT TO THE CONTROVERSIAL CASES OF U.S. ABUSE OF DETAINEES AND EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION AND HEADLINES: "CIA, TORTURE WITHOUT BORDERS." THE EDITORIAL ASKS: "MUST AMERICA FORGET ITS VALUES AND REPUTATION IN THIS MAD RACE WHERE FEAR HAS LED WASHINGTON TO EXPORT TORTURE WHEN ITS DESIGN IS TO EXPORT DEMOCRACY?" (SEE PART C)

ITALY'S ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ IS SEEN BY LE FIGARO AS "A WEAKENING OF THE COALITION" WHILE EDITORIALIST BRUNO FRAPPAT IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX WRITES ABOUT "AN ALLIANCE IN TATTERS." CLAUDE IMBERT IN WEEKLY LE POINT DEVOTES HIS COLUMN TO THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR IN IRAQ, AND THE AMERICAN SUPPORT TO EUROPEAN NEGOTIATIONS WITH TEHRAN. (SEE PART C)

SECRETARY RICE'S TRIP TO ASIA IS BRIEFLY NOTED IN LE FIGARO IN

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AN ARTICLE PRIMARILY DEVOTED TO CHINA'S ANTI-SECESSION LAW AND EUROPE'S DESIRE TO LIFT CHINA'S ARMS EMBARGO. (SEE PART C)

THE NOMINATION OF PAUL WOLFOWITZ TO HEAD THE WORLD BANK IS REPORTED. IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION PASCAL RICHE ENTITLES HIS REPORT: "A HAWK FOR THE WORLD BANK" AND QUOTES SEVERAL REACTIONS: "PURE AND SIMPLE PROVOCATION;" "A DIPLOMATIC DISASTER" "A POLITICAL MISSILE." NOTING CLINTON'S VETO OF A PREVIOUS EUROPEAN NOMINATION FOR AN IMF CHAIRMAN, WHICH FORCED EUROPE TO CHANGE ITS NOMINEE, RICHE CONCLUDES: "SEVERAL EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS SUGGEST THE TIME HAS COME FOR EUROPE'S TURN TO RETURN THE GESTURE."

KAREN HUGHES IS PROFILED IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX BY GILLES BIASSETTE: "THIS FORMER JOURNALIST HAS JUST BEEN TASKED WITH RECONCILING AMERICA WITH THE ARAB-MUSLIM WORLD. SHE PLANS ON 'KILLING PROPAGANDA WITH THE TRUTH.' WHILE HUGHES IS RETURNING TO HER FORMER TURF, COMMUNICATIONS., HER KNOWLEDGE OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES REMAINS VERY LIMITED."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQ - ITALIAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL - CIA EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION

"AN ALLIANCE IN TATTERS"

BRUNO FRAPPAT IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (03/17): "WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY THAT SOON ONLY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND IRAQI SOLDIERS WILL BE LEFT TO 'FINISH' THE JOB, THAT PROSPECT IS GETTING CLOSER. UNTIL RECENTLY, BUSH COULD COUNT ON THE SOLID SUPPORT OF TWO IMPORTANT EUROPEAN ALLIES: GREAT BRITAIN AND ITALY. NOW BERLUSCONI IS WAVERING, AND TONY BLAIR LOOKS MORE AND MORE ISOLATED IN EUROPE. THE ORIGINAL 'ALLIANCE' HAD THREE MISSIONS: TO CHASE SADDAM, TO RID IRAQ OF WMD, AND TO ESTABLISH DEMOCRACY. THE FIRST GOAL HAS BEEN REACHED, THE SECOND, OBVIOUSLY, WILL NEVER BE REACHED. AS FOR THE THIRD, IT IS STILL IN THE MAKING."

"THE ROAD TO TEHRAN"

CLAUDE IMBERT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE POINT (03/17): "IN THE COMPLICATED ORIENT, WE MOVE WITH SIMPLISTIC IDEAS. AFTER THE ANTI-BUSH HYSTERIA PROVOKED BY THE AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN IRAQ, WE ARE NOW IN THE GRIPS OF UNBRIDLED OPTIMISM. THE MIDDLE EAST REMAINS EXPLOSIVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO EXPORT ITS

CONVULSIONS. THE ARAB WORLD CONTINUES TO RESENT GLOBALIZATION EVEN IF SIGNS OF HOPE, AS IN LEBANON, BEGIN TO APPEAR. WHILE SUCCESS IN IRAQ IS NOT GUARANTEED, IT IS A FACT THAT THERE IS THE PROMISE OF A DEMOCRATIC AWAKENING STRETCHING FROM DAMASCUS TO CAIRO. THE IRAQI VOTERS WERE THE FIRST TO GIVE CONFIDENCE TO AMERICA FOR ITS CHOICES. THEY ALSO DISCONCERTED FRENCH DIPLOMACY. WASHINGTON'S WAGER WAS THE ADVENT OF AN EVOLUTION IN ARAB MASSES AND YOUTH. A WAGER THAT IS VERY FAR FROM OUR 'PRO-ARAB' POLICY, MADE UP OF REALISTIC ARRANGEMENTS WITH DESPOTS. BUT THE IRAQI ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH ENCOURAGING, MUST NOT LEAD TO EXCESSIVE EUPHORIA. THE QUESTION THAT HAS THE WEST IN A QUANDARY IS WHETHER IRAN DESERVES THE SAME FATE. TEHRAN'S REGIME IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING UNPOPULAR, AND AMERICANS AND EUROPEANS ALIKE ARE RESIGNED TO ITS FALL FROM WITHIN. NEITHER WASHINGTON, NOR EUROPE NOR TEL AVIV IS READY TO ACCEPT AN IRANIAN NUCLEAR BOMB. HENCE THE NEGOTIATIONS, WITH PERFECT WESTERN COOPERATION: EUROPE FOR THE CARROTS, AMERICA WITH THE STICK."

"EXPORTING TORTURE"

JEAN-MICHEL THENARD IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/17): "THE U.S. DOES NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO TORTURE, BUT BELIEVES IN ITS USEFULNESS WHEN DONE IN SECRET TO FIGHT TERRORISM. THIS HYPOCRISY HAS LED TO A NEW INVENTION: OUT-SOURCING TORTURE. THIS IS A SIGN OF THE BUSH HYPERPOWER'S WEAKNESS. SINCE 9/11, IT IS GOVERNED BY THE FEAR OF BEING VULNERABLE. MUST AMERICA FORGET ITS VALUES AND REPUTATION IN THIS MAD RACE WHERE FEAR HAS LED WASHINGTON TO EXPORT TORTURE WHEN ITS DESIGN IS TO EXPORT DEMOCRACY?"

CHINA - TAIWAN - ARMS EMBARGO

"CONTROVERSY OVER AN EMBARGO"

JEAN-JACQUES MEVEL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/17): "TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT IS TRYING TO PLACE THE DEBATE WHERE IT WILL HURT CHINA THE MOST WHILE USING WASHINGTON'S ARGUMENTS. IN HIS WORDS, THE NEW CHINESE LAW UNILATERALLY CHANGES THE STATUS QUO AND DEPRIVES THE EUROPEANS OF THEIR ARGUMENT TO LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO. CHEN SHUI-BIAN IS TAKING PLEASURE IN TURNING THE TABLES ON CHIRAC, USING THE SAME WORDS THE FRENCH PRESIDENT HAD USED WHEN VISITING BEIJING. THIS TIME THE AGGRESSOR IS CHINA, AND CHEN IS TAKING HIS REVENGE BY ASKING EUROPE TO MAINTAIN THE ARMS EMBARGO. SECRETARY RICE, WHO IS TOURING THE REGION, HAS SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE THAT CHINA'S LAW SHOULD CONVINCE THOSE WHO MIGHT WANT TO SELL WEAPONS TO THE NEW EMERGING POWER. ON THE EUROPEAN SIDE, THE CHINESE ANTI-SECESSION LAW IS CAUSING SOME EMBARRASSMENT. A NEW TRANSATLANTIC CONTROVERSY COULD DELAY EUROPE'S LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO. AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IS CLOSE TO ACCUSING PARIS AND ITS ALLIES OF BEING IRRESPONSIBLE IN THE FAR EAST." LEACH